Workers, Space, and Labor Geography

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that adopting an explicitly spatial theoretical framework can add significantly to our understanding of working-class life. Specifically, I argue that workers are spatial as well as historical social agents and that they seek to shape the economic landscape in ways which facilitate their political and economic goals, though they clearly do not have free range to do so—workers make their own geographies, though not under the conditions of their own choosing. The paper explores how capitalism functions as a spatial system, what this means for workers' spatial praxis, and how workers can try to shape capitalism's geography to their own ends. The paper is in three main sections. The first section lays out the conceptual basis for understanding capitalism as a spatial system. In the second section I examine a number of ways in which a sensitivity to matters spatial can help us understand workers' social praxis. The third section explores some issues related to how the changing geography of capitalism is providing new challenges to workers and organized labor.

During the past decade or so there has been a growing interest across the social sciences and humanities in space and matters geographical. Some have characterized this interest as being part of a broader shift in Western social thought associated with the rise of postmodernism. Edward Soja, for instance, has argued that modernist social theory has focused in its metanarratives on processes of historical progress and transformation.[1] Consequently, any challenge to modernism involves a challenge to what he sees as its hegemonic historicism and brings with it a renewed emphasis on space. Others (e.g., Ellem and Shields, 1999; McGrath-Champ, 1994), whilst perhaps not seeing things in quite such grand epistemological shifts, have nevertheless sought to insert an explicitly spatial perspective into some of the theoretical conceptualizations that have shaped fields such as industrial relations.[2] Regardless, however, of how they have individually characterized this interest in the spatial, the goal of such scholars has been to recognize that social processes are also spatial processes and that space must therefore be conceptualized as playing an important role in the structuring and outcome of social processes, for society does not function in a geographical vacuum.

As part of this consideration of matters spatial there has been a growing entente between human geographers and scholars interested in the various aspects of working-class life. For human geographers, who have long had an interest in understanding how the historical geography of capitalism is made but who have often been not particularly sensitive to workers and their struggles, such an en-

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tente brings with it the possibility of a richer appreciation of the nuances of working-class life. For scholars of working-class life, who have great knowledge of workers and their organizations but who (at least in the eyes of many geographers) have tended to have a relatively underdeveloped conceptualization of the importance of space, this entente brings with it the possibility of a more sophisticated conceptual engagement with the spatiality of capitalism and how space makes a difference to the ways in which social life plays out under capitalism (or other forms of social organization, for that matter). The cross-fertilization of ideas from human geography and from scholarship concerning working-class life has led some to talk about the rise of a field of scholarship referred to as "labor geography."[3] Indeed, it is perhaps testimony to the interest in such an explicitly spatialized understanding of working-class life from scholars in several divergent fields of study that this special issue of ILWCH has been commissioned.[4]

In brief, this emergent field of "labor geography" argues that workers are not just historical agents but are also geographical ones, that workers' lives are spatially embedded in the landscapes in which they live, that this spatial embeddedness may be enabling and/ or constraining of their social praxis, and that workers will thus try to shape in particular ways the geographical structures and relationships within which they live their lives. Of course, whilst workers may try to shape the geography of capitalism in ways which facilitate their political and economic goals, they clearly do not have free rein in doing so. Hence, whilst it is widely accepted that workers make their own histories, though not under the conditions of their own choosing, we must also recognize that they make their own geographies, though likewise not under the conditions of their own choosing. Such a spatialized approach to examining social life, then, recognizes that social struggle can involve explicit spatial struggle and that the way in which the geography of capitalism is made—from the most local of local scales to the truly global—actively structures social life and the struggles therein. Consequently, the geographical is more than simply the context or stage for capital-labor relations—an interesting but for the most part theoretically and politically irrelevant attendant condition. Instead, spatial concerns and considerations actively configure social relations and structures (and, of course, vice versa).

In what follows, then, I seek to lay out a case for why theorizations of working-class life and capital-labor relations need to engage at a theoretical level with "the spatial." The paper is composed of three main sections. In the first section I outline some of the work conducted within human geography which has sought to examine how capitalism operates as a spatial system and how space makes a difference to the ways in which capitalism functions. The second section shows how a sensitivity to matters spatial can help us understand workers' praxis in ways that non-spatially sensitive approaches fail to do. The third section explores some issues related to how the changing geography of capitalism is providing new challenges to workers and their organizations. The paper ends with a brief conclusion.

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Understanding Capitalism as a Spatial System

Arguably, the central tenet of "labor geography" is that capitalism's spatial organization is important to the way in which it functions and that, consequently, the making of this spatial organization is a potential source of great conflict between various factions of capital and of labor. Such ideas draw upon a body of neo-Marxist work that has developed within human geography since the 1970s and which has sought, basically, to spatialize Marx.[5] This work has contended that space does not have ontological status before the actions that bring it into being and should not be considered as merely a pre-existing platform upon which social life plays out but, instead, as something which is forcefully created by the activities of various social actors and which, in turn, structures those activities.[6] Thus, whereas viewing space as simply a stage for the performance of social life separates ontologically the spatial from the social, such that space and society are viewed as capable of existing separately one from the other and are brought together only at the actual moment of the performance, neo-Marxist work in human geography has argued that space and society are dialectically linked, that the one cannot, in fact, exist without the other; space is produced within the very bowels of society whilst, simultaneously, society is deeply structured by its geographies.

Certainly, there are intimations in some of Marx's writings as to the importance of space for how capitalism works as a political economic system. Thus, in *Grundrisse* Marx writes about how revolutions in transportation technology had reduced travel times between the cities of Victorian Britain, thereby effectively bringing about the "annihilation of space [conceived of here as the distance between places] by time," whilst at the end of Volume One of *Capital* he hints at a geographical solution to the problems of overaccumulation in industrial Britain through the export to the colonies of underutilized capital and laborers.[7] Such ideas were, of course, subsequently taken up by Lenin in his thesis about how imperialism represented the highest stage of capitalism, whilst Rosa Luxemburg argued (though clearly wrongly) that capitalism, being an inherently expansive form of economic organization, would collapse in upon itself once it had spread to every nook and cranny of the globe and there were no more pre-capitalist spaces that remained to be brought under its sway.[8] It was not, however, until the work of French theoretician Henri Lefebvre that the connections between the functioning of capitalism and its spatial organization were made more explicit.[9] Specifically, Lefebvre argued that in order for accumulation to occur capital needs to create particular types of landscape and that, consequently, the production of space in certain ways is central to the reproduction of capital and capitalist social relations.[10] Effectively responding to Luxemburg, Lefebvre suggested that

> capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of *Capital,* it has succeeded in achieving 'growth.' We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space.*[11]

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For Lefebvre, then, part of capital's success lies in its capacity to build the appropriate material geographies that it can use to facilitate the extraction and realization of surplus value during the accumulation process and through which it can thereby ensure the tacit renewal of capitalism.

Beginning in the early 1970s, such ideas were taken up and explored by a number of Marxist geographers. Arguably, the most prominent of these has been David Harvey. In a number of early writings Harvey sought to show how the geography of capitalist urbanization was reflective of the dynamics of accumulation.[12] Specifically, he argued that the actual form which the economic landscape took was shaped by the flows of capital into the built environment to produce those structures necessary either for production to take place (factories, roads, etc.) or for consumption (housing, sidewalks, shops, and the like).[13] Consequently, as the demands of accumulation and profit realization change (such as when new forms of transportation technology impact capitalism's operation) or as overaccumulation in the realm of production encourages speculation in real estate and urban development as an outlet for unproductive capital, then so does the form of the built environment often have to be transformed. Hence, Harvey argued, the relationship between the demands of accumulation and the form of the built environment is such that "capital builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it [through disinvestment], usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent point in time."[14]

In his book *The Limits to Capital,* Harvey provided a more detailed theoretical account of this production of space and how it is linked to the on-going accumulation process.[15] In particular, he suggested that capitalists must create particular "spatial fixes" —that is to say, particular geographies of their own organization and of the broader geography of capitalism—in the landscape if accumulation is to proceed. Hence, they must ensure that workers can get to work on time (a consideration which may necessitate securing the construction, perhaps under the auspices of the state, of transportation systems in certain locations), that raw materials reach factories, and that finished commodities reach consumers, all of which will require a certain spatial arrangement of investments in plant, infrastructure, and the built environment in general. For Harvey, such spatial fixes are integral to the circulation of capital and constitute the very basis for the uneven development of the geography of capitalism, which is never fixed but is constantly being refashioned during "[t]he continuous re-structuring of spatial configurations through revolutions in value."[16]

Similar ideas were further developed by Richard Walker and Neil Smith. Thus, in his analysis of suburbanization in the United States, Walker argued that federal encouragement of investments in suburban areas after World War Two represented an effort to prime the economic pump through a deliberate transformation of the nation's urban geography.[17] For Walker, producing the new spaces of the suburbs was linked to ensuring continued capital accumulation and preventing the return of the Depression.[18] For his part, Smith laid out an important theoretical exegesis of the links between the accumulation process and the unevenly developed geography of capitalism, arguing that capitalism's

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spatial structuring was not merely a historical "accident" but was, instead, fundamental to the accumulation process.[19] Capital, Smith argued, has to accommodate two contradictory spatial tendencies, these being the need to be sufficiently embedded in particular locations so that accumulation can take place, and the desire to remain sufficiently spatially mobile so as to take advantage of new opportunities for profitable investment that may open up elsewhere. The negotiation of this tension, Smith contended, shaped the geography of capital investment and the (uneven) spatial development of capitalism. Whereas the specific geographies that are made at particular times and places are dependent upon a host of factors, Smith showed that the production of space per se was integral, rather than contingent, to the continuation of the accumulation process, with "uneven development [being] the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital."[20]

Whilst geographers such as Harvey, Walker, and Smith were developing a conceptual framework that linked the production of space with the machinations of capitalist accumulation, British geographer Doreen Massey outlined how there were particular spatial divisions of labor that emerged under capitalism.[21] Specifically, she argued that the geography of capitalism could be understood as the outcome of a process of the continuous deposition across the landscape of layers of capital investment that built upon, and interacted with, pre-existing spatial arrangements of production and consumption to produce new geographies of uneven development. Thus, she showed how Britain's spatial division of labor which had been inherited from nineteenth century industrialization shaped subsequent rounds of investment in the post-World War Two period. In viewing the economic landscape of capitalism as the product of such historical layerings of differential capital investment and their interaction with the residue of previous rounds of investment (or disinvestment), Massey illustrated how the changing spatial organization of capital systematically structures the social relations of capitalist accumulation, leading her to argue that "[t]he geography of a society makes a difference to the way it works."[22]

For such theorists and others like them, making landscapes in certain ways is central to the ability of any social system to reproduce itself. Hence, whatever else they may do, capitalists (either singularly or collectively) must implement in the landscape particular geographical organizations of investments so as to generate and realize profit, such that capital would not survive without producing space in particular ways—as a landscape of profitability rather than unprofitability, for instance. New ways of organizing production and consumption, then, will usually demand that extant landscapes are restructured. In sum, it is through their ability to secure the making of the geography of capitalism in some ways and not others that capitalists as individuals and as a class are able to guarantee their continued survival, together with that of capitalism as a social system.[23] How capitalism's geography is made is central to capital's ability to reproduce itself over time, even if the particular ways in which space is made are

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historically and geographically contingent. Consequently, much of capital's activities will involve trying to "represen[t] itself in the form of a physical landscape created in its own image."[24]

However, whereas the spatial fixes that capitalists seek to implement in the landscape in their pursuit of profit must have use value for capital—that is to say, such landscapes must facilitate the production and realization of surplus value—they may have little or no use value for labor. Herein lies a source of contradiction and (potential) struggle, for workers may have quite different geographical visions concerning how capitalism should be arranged spatially. Consequently, workers may pursue a spatial fix either of their own organization or of capitalism more generally which is quite different from that preferred by capital. The struggles which are the hallmark of capitalism, then, may not just be over the production and extraction of surplus value in the workplace but may also stem from the production of the material landscape and of the geographical relationships between different places therein.

Conceiving of capitalism as not only a political and economic system but also as a profoundly spatial system takes us into the realm of what we might call "spatial praxis." In particular, whilst much neo-Marxist theorizing within human geography has focused upon understanding how capital attempts to create a spatial fix in its own image, a growing number of "labor geographers" during the 1990s sought to examine how workers' lives were spatially structured and how workers attempt to create what we might call "labor's spatial fix" as they seek to secure their economic and political goals. Such a conceptualization of workers' lives as deeply spatialized and of the reproduction of capitalism as an inherently geographical process puts the production of space (and struggles over this production) at the center of workers' social praxis, such that the making of the spatial relations of capitalism ends up being a central aspect of their social activities, even if they are not recognized as such by those involved.[25] Acknowledging that workers may seek to impose within the landscape their own spatial visions which can be quite different from those of capital, then, forces us to theorize how workers' social practices are shaped by their spatial contexts and how, in turn, their spatial practices play an important role in structuring the evolving social and spatial relations of capitalism.

Workers and Space

Having outlined in general terms how the reproduction of capitalism requires the construction of landscapes in particular ways, together with how capital and labor (and the various factions therein) seek to implement their own favored spatial fixes within those landscapes, in this section I want to highlight how a theoretical sensitivity to matters spatial can help us understand workers' praxis. Specifically, there are three issues regarding the spatial context within which workers find themselves that are important: how workers' spatial embeddedness may influence their behavior; how workers must engage with the unevenly developed geography of capitalism; and how workers seek (or not) to make com-

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mon cause over space and how this shapes the geographical scale at which they choose to organize themselves.

Spatial Embeddedness

All workers, to a greater or lesser degree, are spatially embedded, whether by kinship and familial ties, by residence, by work ties, or by some other social obligation. Even migrant workers are dependent, no matter how ephemerally, upon the spatial relationships that tie them into the local labor markets of wherever they happen to be working at any particular time, whilst those labor markets in turn are tied in to broader geographical relationships which network the global economy. Thus, whilst workers may escape particular geographical relationships (perhaps by migrating elsewhere or by changing jobs), they can never escape space per se, they can never live completely spaceless lives.

The fact that workers are embroiled in particular geographical relationships can play an important role in structuring their political praxis. For instance, some workers in depressed regional economies may be bound to those economies by their mortgages and an inability to sell their homes even should they wish to move elsewhere, whilst others may be unwilling to relocate to places where the economy is doing better because they do not want to be far away from the burial sites of their ancestors. Whatever the reason, particular workers may feel fettered to particular places. Likewise, certain segments of capital may also be tied to particular places. Thus, utility companies with large fixed investments in a local economy or the banks that hold the mortgages of workers in a depressed region may be unable financially simply to walk away from such investments. As a result, such workers and capitalists are likely to have a much greater vested interest in maintaining the viability of the local economy than are those segments of either capital or labor who can more easily relocate elsewhere when the local economy is doing poorly. Accordingly, they are undoubtedly more likely to participate in various cross-class local boosterist campaigns to attract investment into their particular locality than are their more mobile confederates; indeed, such cross-class boosterism has become a standard response in many regions experiencing economic hardtimes.[26]

Without an understanding of how workers may be spatially trapped in particular localities, their participation in such local boosterist campaigns and their siding with local capital to encourage investment into their communities—investment which may be fleeing places where wages are higher—may be taken as evidence of a bad dose of "false consciousness." However, if we are sensitive to the spatial contexts within which particular groups of workers or capitalists make decisions about their political praxis, we can see that, in fact, workers may choose to defend their particular spaces within the regional, national, or global economy because they feel they have no other choice. Hence, their spatial entrapment makes them reliant for their well-being upon continued investment into their own communities (since they cannot readily move elsewhere), such that they may participate in cross-class coalitions not as dupes of capital but as

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fully aware social actors who perceive their own futures as being dependent upon the success or failure of local boosterism and who act accordingly. In the process, of course, they also play a role in shaping the unfolding spatial flows of investment and thus the production of capitalism's geography.

Equally, an understanding of workers' spatial embeddedness and/or entrapment, together with an appreciation of how local labor markets are structured geographically, may help us understand how certain workers can gain entrance to employment whereas others cannot. Thus, whereas the situation of jobs going unfilled in regions with high unemployment may often be explained as the result of workers having the wrong skills mix or of not being willing enough to work for the low wages that are perhaps being offered (this latter being a favorite explanation of conservative economists), such situations can also often be explained by comprehending how particular groups of workers may be shut out of the local labor market due to the spatial relationships which limit their mobility and ability to transcend space. Hence, there may exist a "spatial mismatch" within local labor markets between where many unemployed workers are resident (the inner-city) and where many of the new service sector and manufacturing jobs are being created (the suburbs).[27] Indeed, this geographical incongruity and the inability of inner-city workers to access these jobs due either to lack of private transportation or to the inadequacies of public transportation systems has often led to intense struggles over the provision of mass transit and which neighborhoods should be linked through it.[28] Without comprehending how workers may be unable to overcome the spatial barriers to accessing local labor markets, we may not get an accurate explanation of why some jobs continue to go unfilled in regions of high unemployment and so may also be less able to design effective public policy to link workers who need jobs with employers who need workers.

Evidently, discerning how workers may be spatially embedded and/or entrapped in particular locations can provide insights into their social and political behavior that are missed or misinterpreted by conceptual approaches which are not so sensitive to the spatial contexts of workers' lives.

Engaging with the Unevenly Developed Geography of Capitalism

Given that the economic geography of capitalism unfolds in a spatially uneven manner, both workers and capitalists will have to deal with myriad different conditions extant in different places. Their efforts to come to terms with this unevenly developed geography, particularly given how different social actors are themselves differentially spatially embedded, can significantly shape the political decisions that various segments of capital and labor make. One way in which this is so can be illustrated by reference to how employers and unions in negotiation for a national collective bargaining agreement may attempt to incorporate within its provisions the quite varied working conditions, costs of living, vitality of local labor markets, and cultures of organizing to be found in different localities in which the union represents workers.

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If we are to take just one element of a typical union contract, namely wage rates, then any union which seeks to negotiate nationally with its employers concerning this issue will usually have one of three options to pursue: (i) to seek to bring the wages of all workers up to the same level as those of the industry's highest paid workers; (ii) to establish a uniform wage rate that may be lower than the wages paid the industry's highest paid workers but which nevertheless sets a minimum base rate below which none in the industry will fall; and (iii) to set different wage rates for workers in different communities based upon the different costs of living in those communities, such that workers will be paid different amounts in absolute terms but will end up with similar wage rates in relative terms.[29] If the union is most concerned about removing the employer's ability to whipsaw different communities against each other on the basis of different wage rates, then negotiators may seek a national agreement in which all workers are paid the same rates. This, though, may raise its own set of spatial and political issues. If the union seeks to use the highest wages in the industry as the national benchmark this may burden to such an extent employers with low profit margins that they refuse to abide by it and may turn to cheaper nonunion workers or labor-saving technology to limit their wage bills. If, however, the union's negotiators seek to establish a national wage rate based upon what less profitable employers can more easily pay, this may encourage more employers to agree to the national rate but it may also cause resentment on the part of the highest paid workers in the industry who see their own wage rates being held back by those of their lower paid confederates elsewhere. Consequently, high wage workers may decide that their own interests are best served by opting out of any national wage agreement and seeking to negotiate locally for their wages. If, on the other hand, the union is most concerned about ensuring that all workers in the industry enjoy a similar standard of living it may attempt to negotiate a national contract which allows for regionally weighted wage rates. This strategy, sensitive to the geographical variations in living costs in different regions, would equalize wage rates in real terms by providing workers with regionally varying absolute amounts but it would also leave the door open to whipsawing by employers.

Of course, which of these strategies any particular union chooses to pursue will rest upon a host of factors, but it will undoubtedly rest at least in part upon a consideration of the spatial goals and issues at hand and how the union's goals will have different consequences in different regions. An appreciation, then, of union members' and negotiators' spatial embeddedness and an understanding of why they may seek different types of spatial fixes—a nationally uniform versus a locally sensitive wage system—allows us to interrogate more energetically why different groups of workers may choose quite different negotiating goals and strategies. At the same time, it can help us understand different employers' responses to such a union goal. Hence, to draw on one empirical example, in the case of the efforts in the 1960s by the New York-based leadership of the East Coast dockers' union (the International Longshoremen's Association [ILA]) to secure a national wage agreement with shippers from Maine to Texas in the face

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of the growing use of containerization in the industry, employers in New York, where wages had historically been the highest in the industry, initially opposed such a plan out of fear that their own contract settlements would be tied up for long periods of time whilst they awaited the outcome of negotiations over local issues in ports such as New Orleans. The union, though, cognizant of the fact that the ongoing construction of the US interstate highway system and the growth of intermodalism were reducing the travel times between various East Coast ports, thereby effectively bringing low-wage Southern ports into greater spatial proximity and thus competition with New York, pressed the issue.

Although negatively inclined towards the plan at first, after New York employers came to feel the effects of competition that had been unleashed by the growing spatial integration of the US economy, they ultimately came to support a national wage rate once they realized that it would force their lower paying competitors in ports such as New Orleans to increase their rates to match those of New York. A national wage rate, then, would be a way for New York employers to improve their own competitiveness. Perhaps paradoxically, though, whereas unionized dockers in the South initially favored such a national agreement as a way of bringing their wages up to the same levels as in New York, the fact that after it was finally implemented many Southern employers during the 1970s turned to lower-wage, nonunion stevedoring companies led a number of ILA local unions in the Gulf in the mid-1980s to begin agitating for the right to break away from the union's national agreement, agitation which concerned the ILA's New York leaders because it opened the way for these ports to be used as a means of undercutting higher wage ports on the Atlantic coast.[30] The point in all this, then, is that both employers and workers had to engage with the geographical contexts of their industry and with the changing spatial relationships between different ports within that industry which were brought about by such technological innovations as containerization and intermodalism.

Organizing and Spatial Relations of Power

One of the activities in which workers in different communities or workplaces often engage is attempting to build solidarity with one another. Whatever else it may be, building solidarity is an inherently geographical practice, for it is a coming together by workers over space. Thus, workers intent upon establishing links of solidarity must address the kinds of geographical issues outlined above, whilst understanding how different workplaces and communities are networked together spatially can help us comprehend why workers engage in various types of political praxis. In particular, there are two issues which are pertinent to examine concerning the spatial aspects of developing labor solidarity, these being the question of which sets of interests are actually being defended in such activities and questions relating to how the ways in which communities and workplaces are networked together spatially shape workers' decisions regarding political strategy in any confrontation with an employer.

Typically, of course, the practice of labor solidarity is assumed to be a po-

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litically progressive activity, as workers come together across space in mutual support of one another. Certainly, this is often the case, with workers in one location making great personal sacrifices so that their confederates elsewhere can gain advantages in a particular dispute. However, simply assuming that workers coming together across space is an example of heroic proletarianism is, I want to argue, misguided because it fails to take into account the spatial contexts within which decisions to engage in such solidarity actions are made. More specifically, whilst such actions are assumed by default to be about defending common class interests across space, in fact they may sometimes have more to do with space than class. Such a conflict between spatial and class goals has been explored theoretically by Rebecca Johns.[31] In particular, Johns argues that whilst some solidarity campaigns are designed to confront the class relations between workers and employers regardless of the consequences for any particular locale within the space-economy (what Johns calls "transformatory solidarity"), others, whilst giving the outward appearance of seeking to defend common class interests, are actually about protecting particular workers' privileged positions within the spatial division of labor and may have nothing to do with challenging the extant class relations of capitalism (actions Johns calls "accommodationist solidarity").[32]

Thus, workers in, say, the United States may draw upon the rhetoric of labor internationalism whilst engaging in solidarity with workers in, say, Brazil to help the latter increase their wages. However, in engaging in this solidarity action the US workers may have less than altruistic motives and may, in fact, simply want to see the Brazilian workers increase their wages to such a level that they no longer represent a potential low-wage rival to which capital may relocate from the United States. Rather than challenging the extant social relations of capitalism through labor internationalism, such accommodationist solidarity actually seeks "to accommodate them while reasserting the dominance of a particular group of workers within capitalism's spatial structures." By "assisting workers abroad in organizing, this kind of solidarity hopes to take [those] workers out of competition for jobs, [so] reducing the incentive for capital flight" from high-wage to low-wage communities.[33] Through seeking to defend one group of workers' privileged position within the global spatial division of labor at the expense of another's, the result of such accommodationist solidarity, then, is actually to divide workers spatially under the guise of uniting them across space.

Of course, in practice it may be difficult to determine in which kind of solidarity action (accommodationist or transformatory) any particular group of workers is involved, especially given that workers may sometimes hold contradictory positions (being accommodationist with regard to some issues and transformatory with regard to others) or that the types of solidarity in which they do engage may change over time as the ways in which their own local economies are tied into the broader national or global economy change. This, however, does not diminish the theoretical importance of the accommodationist/transformatory distinction and what it means for understanding both workers' political praxis and how they shape the spatial relations of capitalism through such ac-

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tions; engaging in accommodationist solidarity may help keep investment in one community whereas transformatory solidarity may mean it relocates elsewhere. Failing to understand the spatial considerations that exist in any solidarity campaign, then, can lead us to false conclusions about both its motives and its goals.

Whilst understanding workers' own spatial concerns can help us comprehend why different groups of workers may decide to engage in different types of solidarity actions, understanding how communities are networked together spatially can provide still other insights into why workers choose to engage in specific types of political praxis in certain circumstances. Whereas the practice of solidarity is often seen as the only way in which workers can exert influence over their employers, this may not be the only strategy open to workers, for an awareness of how different groups of workers are spatially tied together may open up avenues for alternative strategies, strategies that do not so much rely upon workers organizing across space as they rely upon workers organizing, as it were, through space. In fact, workers may sometimes be able to confront an employer that itself transcends space through its multilocational organization without themselves having to adopt a similar national or international scale of geographical organization. By way of example, we might consider briefly the 1998 dispute between the United Auto Workers and General Motors.

The dispute itself began on June 5, 1998 when approximately 3,400 members of UAW Local 659 walked off the job at a metal stamping plant in Flint, Michigan. A few days later they were followed by 5,800 members of UAW Local 651 who struck at a Delphi Automotive Systems components plant (also in Flint) that made spark plugs, speedometers, and fuel filters for GM.[34] The impact of these strikes was quickly felt throughout GM as the corporation's North American assembly operations began to close due to lack of parts. At its height, the dispute caused 193,517 workers to be laid off at 27 of GM's 29 North American assembly plants and at 117 components plants owned by Delphi (at the time a GM subsidiary), and ultimately came to be one of the most expensive strikes ever waged in the United States. The primary reason for the speed with which the consequences of the two strikes in Flint spread to affect GM plants in Canada, Mexico, the United States, and even Singapore is the adoption during recent years by GM of just-in-time (JIT) production methods. GM's reliance upon JIT, which makes timely delivery of components to assembly plants a necessity, allowed the Flint strikers to spread the dispute rapidly throughout the company's corporate structure, in the process illuminating the spatial links in GM's production chain through the order in which plants ceased operations. Assembly plants relying upon the Flint components plants had to shut first, which then meant that other components plants supplying these assembly plants no longer had places to send their components and were shut down too. Rather than having to rely upon trans-spatial solidarity with workers in other plants throughout North America and beyond to bring pressure to bear on GM corporate managers to settle the Flint disputes in favor of Local 651 and 659 members, like a worm burrowing through the economic landscape the Flint workers instead were able to use GM's own geographical organization to spread the dispute far

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and wide. In effect, they browbeat GM not by transcending space to make links with workers located in many points across the economic landscape but by digging into their own locale to halt production at just two points (the plants in Flint) and then letting the dispute's consequences cascade across the landscape.

Certainly, this is perhaps an unusual situation and I do not mean to suggest that there were no elements of trans-spatial solidarity exhibited during the dispute—Canadian autoworkers, for instance, did tell GM that they would refuse to work any stamping dies relocated out of the Flint plants. Equally, the strategy employed by the Flint workers (with the tacit endorsement of the national UAW leadership) had different consequences in different parts of the GM corporate organization. Thus, some workers were sympathetic to the Flint workers' goals, whereas others complained that they had been laid off as a result of a dispute in Flint that did not, in their eyes, concern them directly—a reaction that strained relationships between different local UAW unions. Nevertheless, the dispute does clearly show that it is not necessary always for workers to develop trans-spatial solidarity when confronting an employer which is itself multi-locational in organization. By focusing action upon one locale in the economic landscape (Flint) the strikers were able to hijack GM's own spatial structure of organization and so to spread the consequences of their actions across the landscape. In effect, they turned GM's spatial organization against the company. Of course, such a strategy will not be successful in all situations, especially those in which JIT is not so prevalent, but it does illustrate the ways in which an appreciation of how the economic landscape is itself networked together geographically through such things as a corporation's organizational structure can help us to understand the dynamics of worker praxis, how the consequences of such praxis are diffused across the space-economy, and how workers' comprehension of their own spatial contexts may encourage them to develop different types of strategy. Such an appreciation is one that some groups of workers and labor activists are currently trying to foster as they engage in what we might call "guerilla cartographies" of their employers' operations. The "Mapping Supplier Chains" project of the International Research Network on Autowork in the Americas (IRNAA), for instance, is presently attempting to map the emerging structure of the automobile industry in various countries and to determine the spatial linkages between different plants.[35]

Working Space

So far I have examined how capitalism operates as a spatial system, how different social actors seek to impose their particular spatial visions on the landscape and how this may be a source of intense political conflict, how workers' spatial embeddedness can shape their social praxis, and how having an understanding of the spatial contexts within which workers and capitalists make decisions, together with what constitute their spatial goals, can provide insights into why they do what they do. In this final section, I want to consider how the changing geography of contemporary capitalism is providing new challenges to workers and

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organized labor. In particular, there are a number of social and spatial processes that are having significant implications for the ways in which workers and unions go about organizing themselves. Three bear particular consideration, these being globalization, the changing relationship for many workers in the industrialized economies between home and places of (paid) work, and the general shift away from manufacturing and towards service sector employment.

Globalization and Space

Globalization is, of course, a process about which much has been written in recent years. One way in which globalization has been conceptualized is as a process of the reduction of the time it takes to get from any one part of the planet to any other, such that different places now appear to be much closer together than they were in the past—a transformation that has been rendered vividly in the metaphor of the "shrinking globe." This annihilation of space by time is dramatically transforming the spatial relationships between different parts of the globe, such that it is now possible to think of places like Manila, Port-au-Prince, Dakar, and Bangkok as quite literally manufacturing suburbs of Los Angeles, New York, Paris, and Tokyo.[36] In light of such spatial transformations that processes of globalization appear to be bringing with them, there are (at least) two significant things to bear in mind.

First, as paradoxical as it might seem, in an age of the shrinking of relative distances between places, spatial considerations actually become more, rather than less, significant with regard to the operations of capital. Hence, as modern transportation and telecommunication technologies mean that many segments of capital are no longer as tied to particular locations as they once were and can now, instead, supply markets from much greater distances than before, so do they have much greater choice in where they actually select to locate their investments. Consequently, they are likely to be much more discerning in their locational decisions than when they had fewer locational options open to them, such that the determination to locate investment in one community rather than another may increasingly hinge on almost imperceptible differences in conditions between them. It would seem, in fact, that in a shrinking world the geographical differentiation of the global space-economy is becoming ever more important to capital's decisionmaking processes and to how the geography of capitalism is made.

Second, the transformations in the spatial relationships between different parts of the globe brought about by such shrinking of distances is, clearly, having major negative implications for many workers across the planet. However, at the same time, it may also be opening some possibilities for worker organization. In particular, by shrinking the distances between places globalization is actually forcing many workers to become more familiar with the lives of fellow workers who may live thousands of miles from them. Certainly, this is a complicated process as globalization itself sometimes also elicits a heightening of localism as communities feel themselves under attack from the outside—a dialec-

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tic of globalization and localization that Benjamin Barber has referred to as "Jihad vs. McWorld."[37] Nevertheless, it is clear that as the friction of distance between places gets less, workers can more readily interact with places physically distant from them.[38] Moreover, the rise of modern telecommunications technologies means that the consequences of events—a strike here, a coup d'êtat there—can be transmitted throughout the increasingly spatially interconnected global economy almost instantaneously and has led Michel Foucault, for instance, to talk about how we now live in an "epoch of simultaneity," wherein the occurrence of events and our knowledge of them through the Internet or CNN or other news sources are virtually simultaneous.[39]

In such an increasingly spatially interconnected and simultaneous world of what, borrowing from Ben Agger, we might call "fast capitalism," workers, then, may more easily, more rapidly, and more widespreadly extend the consequences of actions across the global economic landscape (as we saw with the GM dispute outlined above).[40] Consequently, in thinking about how capitalism is structured as a global geographical entity it is important also to think about how workers (and capitalists) engage in forms of "spatialized chrono-politics" to take advantage of, or to limit the negative consequences for their own position of, the speed with which the effects of particular political praxis are diffused throughout the space-economy. Hence, in the case of the GM dispute, the consequences of the Flint strikes spread throughout GM's corporate structure very quickly (within five days seventy-one GM plants had either had to shut down completely or at least cut back on production). However, after six weeks of shutdown the company was able to reorganize its components supplying operations and bring two assembly plants back into operation, which subsequently forced the UAW to settle the dispute quickly. Whereas the Flint workers were able to capitalize on their ability to have the consequences of the dispute spread quickly throughout GM's corporate structure (they gained some major concessions from the company), they clearly had only a certain amount of time in which to press their claims. Both time and space, then, became objects of struggle as, on the one hand, the union sought to use to its advantage the temporal window of opportunity it had gained by bringing GM's North American operations to a virtual standstill whilst, on the other, the corporation scurried to reorganize its spatial structure of delivery of components in as short a time as possible.

In thinking about globalization, then, it is important to conceive of how transformations to the global space-economy may force both workers and capitalists to reevaluate their political praxis as some avenues of action are closed yet others may simultaneously be opened, together with how the new spatial relationships of the global economy may be engaged with for the purpose of furthering particular political agendas. Thus, whereas space is frequently used by capital to hide various parts of the production process across the global economic landscape—locating production in a region which is geographically distant or isolated within the broader space-economy effectively separates spatially the producers of commodities from the consumers thereof—labor solidarity can bring workers together across space such that their geographical separation no

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longer conceals the oppression of one group of workers from the eyes of others.[41] Whatever else it may be, international solidarity spawned as a response to globalization, then, is an explicit attempt to bridge space so that the interests of one group of workers can be brought to the attention of (and supported by) workers in other parts of the global space-economy, though, as we have seen with Johns's work, perhaps for quite different reasons. Through such actions we are not only made aware of how space can be used to obscure the social relations between workers, but international solidarity or mapping commodity chains also allows workers to "open up" the landscape so as to make the spatial connections between workers in different parts of the globe visible.

Changing Spatial Relationships and Worker Identity

For many workers, the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fundamentally transformed the relationship between home and paid employment. Indeed, the separation of home and wage-earning work was a crucial process that allowed the real subsumption of labor to capital through the spread of the factory system. Equally, the spatial separation between home and places of paid work served as an important geographical basis for the emergence of mass unionism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as industrialization proceeded to bring large numbers of workers together in factories and mines. At the same time, new spatial relationships emerged with regard to the residential locations of workers (who now often had to live fairly close to their places of employment), relationships which helped reinforce their collective identities as workers, for people who worked together frequently lived close to each other. In turn, the model of union organizing that emerged out of such a situation was one that frequently assumed that workers were full-time employees who work for a specific employer, often in a long-term relationship (the classic example here being the "mass" worker in mining, manufacturing, or transport). Contemporary trends at the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, appear to be reworking once again the spatial relationships between work and home for many workers, as the growth of contingent work, government make-work schemes, self-employment, and telecommuting bring about a generally looser spatial relationship to the labor market and the point of production than has historically been the case for many.

As Richard Hyman has argued, changes in how capitalism appears to be functioning in many parts of the world have brought about a situation in which "the spatial location and social organization of work, residence, consumption and sociability have become highly differentiated," such that the average employee today "may live a considerable distance from fellow-workers, possess a largely 'privatized' domestic life or a circle of friends unconnected with work, and pursue cultural or recreational interests quite different from those of other employees in the same workplace."[42] Whereas the spatial organization of capitalism upon which mass unionism was built during the past century (and upon which workers, particularly males, constructed their social identities as workers)

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was one in which the paid workplace and the home were usually spatially proximate, such that working-class identity in one sphere (the paid workplace) was reinforced in the other (the working-class neighborhood), contemporary developments are intensifying the geographical fragmentation of workers' lives.[43] For Hyman, then, the spatial "disjuncture between work and community (or indeed the destruction of community in much of its traditional meaning) entails the loss of many of the localized networks which strengthened the supports of union membership (and in some cases made the local union almost a 'total institution')." The result, he suggests, is a situation in which the increasing spatial disarticulation of the places of paid work from the places of worker residence is undercutting the traditional identities upon which collective union action was historically based, such that new identities are emerging, identities which are often constructed around spaces of consumption rather than those of production and in which the identity of the "collective worker" has been increasingly replaced by a growing "individualism" on the part of workers. Hence, whereas formerly many workers' "institutionalized solidarities were reinforced by the broader networks of everyday life . . . the possibility and character of collectivism are today very different when work and everyday life are increasingly [spatially] differentiated."

Certainly, this is something of a simplification, but it does raise important questions about how the spatial restructuring of workers' everyday lives, particularly when compared to how workers' lives were structured geographically in the past, are reshaping the possibilities for their political praxis and the formation of their cultural identities. Hence, in old industrial areas many male workers' gendered conceptions of themselves as "going out to work" and so engaging in "man's work" are being reformulated as economic restructuring means they may increasingly be staying at home, confined to the spaces of domesticity either as their wives engage in wage labor outside of the home or as more workers telecommute and work from home. Equally, given that worker identities are constructed geographically, globalization's impacts on the spatial relationships between places may encourage the emergence for many of new transnational worker identities as international flows of capital and labor link various parts of the planet in novel and varied ways. Thus, how Turks in German and French auto plants or Mexicans in US poultry-processing plants think of themselves culturally—are they adopting local cultural norms with regard to work and unions, for instance?—and how they are received by native-born workers will have significant impacts on the conduct of local industrial relations. Will workers with a foot in each of what are often two quite different lifeworlds retain the norms of their own cultural background, adopt those of their new homes, or develop some amalgam of the two, with the latter being especially likely in the case of migrant workers who are part-year residents in their home and adopted communities?[44] How will their cultural identities be shaped by their spatial to-ing and fro-ing from one social milieu to another and back again, and by their changing mental conceptions of the relative distances between places which this will undoubtedly facilitate?

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Space and Worker Organizing

Above I have touched upon how workers' everyday lives are spatially structured. Here I want to consider what this means for the ability of unions to organize the workplace, for the spatial relations within which workers live and the spatial relations of the workplace can have significant impacts upon unions' capacity to organize. For instance, many women workers have much greater domestic responsibilities than do their husbands and, as a consequence, lead lives that are more closely tied spatially to the home and to their children's routines than are men's. The fact that women may be more likely to burden the responsibility for dropping off children at school or for doing grocery shopping significantly shapes the spatial range and patterns of their mobility throughout the day. This may limit the options they have for paid employment, forcing them to work closer to home than do their husbands (since they have less time to travel further distances to work) or allowing them only to be able to fit in part-time work between their daily domestic chores.[45] Equally, given that their lives are often more spatially and temporally constrained than are men's, women may not have the same amount of free time as their husbands to travel to and attend union meetings held at a distant place of work and may find it easier, instead, to attend such meetings in the nearby home of a fellow worker where union politics and domestic responsibilities can be undertaken simultaneously in the same location—although this too may become ever harder to facilitate as the spatial disjuncture between work and home means that many workers from the same workplace also increasingly live significant distances from each other, at least in the United States.[46] If it is to be successful, then, union organizing must take into account the spatialized nature of workers' lives, for a model of union organizing that does not fit into the everyday spatio-temporal experiences of different types of workers (male versus female, for instance). Indeed, in this context Nigel Haworth and Harvie Ramsay have suggested that the failure of unions to take into consideration the fact that women workers' domestic obligations mean that they frequently live in quite different social realms from men—and, we might add, different spatial realms too—has resulted in international union solidarity to date largely having remained a male preserve.[47] Only when unions develop strategies that are sensitive to the different social—and, we might add again, different spatial—contexts within which men and women live their lives, they argue, is it likely that more women workers will see international labor solidarity as a solution to their problems.

Such issues of how workers' lives are spatially structured raise a number of important questions concerning the politics of space and workplace organizing. In the case of the United States, for instance, the typical model of workplace organizing is one that has been developed within the context of manufacturing facilities and it is one that has incorporated within it a number of quite specific spatial assumptions. In particular, such a model often focuses upon trying to identify those locations within a plant that are union "hot shops" and frequently uses as one of its primary (if not only) organizing tools the picketing of large, central-

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ized facilities which have regular shift changes and only a few points of access (that is to say, workplaces that can be serviced by a small number of organizers who are strategically located at the few points of spatial entry and egress to the work facility and who hand out leaflets to passing workers, who themselves are easily distinguishable from management by their dress).[48]

Whilst such tactics and spatial assumptions may be reasonable for organizing large manufacturing or mining facilities, they are less likely to match the geographical realities of most offices or retail locations, an issue which is of growing importance, given the growth in service employment. Specifically, in these latter workplaces there may not be regular shift changes, workers may labor in smaller groups and in much closer spatial contact with management, they may work at multiple job sites (as in the case of janitors, service-call employees, bike messengers, taxi drivers, etc.), and they may need to dress in a professional manner, which may make them difficult to tell apart from their supervisors as they leave work. Moreover, the spatial layout of many service sector workplaces is often such that it may be more difficult for service sector workers to escape the constant gaze of their supervisor (or customers, in the case of retail establishments) than is the case with the coal mine or the large manufacturing shopfloor, which may provide workers more hidden spaces for talking union that are beyond the easy access of management. Indeed, the physical layout of the workspace can so enhance management's power that corporations have spent much time and effort designing office space in such a way as to facilitate the surveillance of their employees —for instance, locating rows of secretaries in an open-plan typing pool so that they can be monitored more easily by the watchful eye of a single supervisor than if they were in individual offices.[49]

Given such spatial considerations, several authors have argued that organizing service sector workers may require models which rely upon different types of spatial strategy and assumptions than do those developed for manufacturing facilities.[50] Indeed, in the context of dramatic spatial changes between the places of paid work and the home, and between different parts of the globe, it has been suggested that if unions are to be successful then traditional industrial or craft-based unionism may have to give way to what has been called "geographical unionism" or "social movement unionism," wherein the focus of union attention is expanded beyond the strict spatial confines of the workplace to include the broader community (including the spaces of consumption).[51] Implicitly, such a model of unionism seeks to overcome spatial divides between the workplace and the world beyond which have historically served as the basis for unionism and collective bargaining in many countries.[52]

In seeking to increase their effectiveness, a number of unions have adopted quite creative political strategies which focus not so much on organizing directly the spaces of production but on using the spaces of consumption to bring pressure to bear upon workers' employers. One of the most well known is the Justice for Janitors (JfJ) campaign of the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU). JfJ has actively adopted an organizational strategy that has sought to incorporate within its bounds the ways in which workers' worklives are

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spatially structured. Thus, one of the aspects of janitors' worklives which is quite different from most manufacturing workers is that janitors working for large office cleaning companies may have to clean fifteen or twenty different buildings in any given night. Clearly, in such a situation, seeking to organize on a workplace by workplace basis would be a Herculean task and one likely to fail, given the complex network of subcontracting arrangements between building owners and janitorial companies and the difficulties of gaining access to possibly hundreds of different worksites. In response, JfJ has developed an innovative form of "geographical unionism" in which the SEIU uses public actions to move the janitors' struggle beyond the private spaces of the multiple buildings within which they work and into the public spaces of the streets, thereby pressuring both the janitorial contractors and the building owners to negotiate with the union over wages and working conditions. Such a strategy has been used in Los Angeles where the SEIU has fought to establish standardized wage and benefit packages within various districts across the city, districts that are spatially demarcated so as to reflect the different conditions extant in the various labor markets in which janitors work: Century City versus Downtown, for instance.[53] By changing its spatial strategy, then, JfJ has avoided the problem of having to organize on a workplace-by-workplace, company-by-company basis in an industry wherein only a small number of workers may be employed in any particular work site or by any particular company. Whilst these tactics are not themselves necessarily new—similar ones have been used for decades by unions in industries in which workers may have attachments to the industry though not necessarily to particular employers (such as waitressing)—they certainly are quite different from the model typically used by US unions in the manufacturing sector and highlight the importance of thinking about the spatiality of the workplace if organizing is to be successful.[54]

In related fashion (if one will pardon the pun), similar tactics of changing the spatial terrain of political conflict and organizing have been adopted by unionists fighting the spread of garment sweatshops, both within the United States and abroad. Again, these tactics are not necessarily new but they do indicate that being cognizant of one's spatial context can be important when trying to further worker interests. Seeing the difficulty of trying to organize sweatshops at the point of production (given the fact that they often appear and disappear virtually overnight), in 1995 the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) initiated its Stop Sweatshops Campaign, which aimed to shift its focus of praxis from the point of production to the place of consumption through pressuring retailers who set prices within the industry. Specifically, the union has sought to use the power of consumers to force retailers to compel their suppliers to improve workers' wages and conditions, doing so through a series of well-orchestrated public demonstrations, leafleting outside stores, talking with church congregations, and other such activities. Through changing the geographical terrain upon which it has agitated for workers' rights, UNITE has managed to expand the scale of its praxis to use the power of the broader purchasing public to pressure directly the retailers and thereby to pres-

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sure indirectly the garment manufacturers. Given that the retailers are more likely to know who are their suppliers than is the union, such an approach, perhaps, provides a means to improve workers' lives that is less dependent for its success upon the union's ability to locate all of the hidden crevices of the economic landscape within which sweatshops lie than is the traditional workplace organizing model.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to provide a brief overview of how workers affect space and how space affects workers. How capitalism is made spatially clearly impacts how workers and others involved in the industrial relations nexus engage in political praxis. Likewise, how such social actors engage in praxis shapes how the geography of social life is constituted. Thinking about how workers' lives are spatially embedded and structured, then, can provide important insights into why they do the things they do and how such praxis is reflective of their various spatial visions. Hence, if they are to be successful, workers and their organizations must speak to the question of how organizing will take into consideration the different ways in which workers' everyday lives are spatially structured and what kind of organizing is best suited to the different kinds of space within which workers find themselves. Understanding the place of spatial relations in the construction of workers' identities and in the structuring of their political praxis thus allows productive conceptual and empirical links to be made between human geography and scholarship on working-class life, for it is important that we recognize that workers make not only their own histories but also their own geographies, though not necessarily under the conditions of their own choosing. Such a recognition requires critically engaging with space and the spatial at a theoretical level, rather than simply adding space after the "more serious" work of theorizing the social has been done.

Suggesting that workers (and other social actors) have an interest in making the geography of capitalism in particular ways allows us to say a number of interrelated things. First, recognizing that capitalism functions as a geographical system allows us to consider how workers' political praxis relates to their desire to construct the spatial relations of capitalism in particular ways. Much as capital must create its own "spatial fix" appropriate to its needs at particular times in particular locations, so must workers ensure that the spatial relations of capitalism are structured in such a way as to ensure their own self-reproduction and social survival. Consequently, the making of the spatial relations of capitalism should be seen not as secondary to workers' social praxis but as being at the very center of such praxis, even if it may not be understood as such by those involved. Just as capitalists seek to make the economic geography of capitalism in certain ways, so, too, do workers have spatial imaginations that they seek to have implemented in the landscape. Appreciating this fact allows us to connect conceptually workers' spatial practices with the evolving social and spatial relations of capitalism.

Second, even when workers engage in struggles that are less than revolu-

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tionary and which may even support certain segments of capital (as in the various growth machines in which they participate), the making of capitalism's geography clearly is not the sole prerogative of capital. Consequently, understanding only how capital is structured and operates is insufficient to comprehend the making of global capitalism's spatiality. Recognizing that workers play a role in shaping how economic landscapes are fashioned requires that a more active conception of their geographical agency be incorporated into theorizations of why the economic landscapes of capitalism appear as they do. Capital is not the only actor that shapes the geography of capitalism or even, in some places and times, the most significant one.

Third, such an approach allows us to see that different groups of workers may prefer to have implemented in the landscape quite different sets of spatial relations. This facilitates the deconstruction of the monolithic category of "labor" to show that "labor" is a social category which may have quite significant cleavages within itself, depending upon workers' spatial embeddedness and their geographical location relative to other groups of workers. Assuming such a "non-essentialist" view of workers allows us to recognize that competing groups of workers may have vested interests in generating quite different spatial fixes and that they consequently seek to impose radically different spatial visions on the landscape. Viewing workers in this way provides not only a more realistic understanding of workers' socio-spatial existence but it also allows for greater agency to be written into accounts of their socio-spatial activities. Appreciating that different groups of workers may have quite different influences on the ways in which the space-economy is structured can impart something of a corrective to accounts which present workers as inherently powerless to shape the economic geography of global capitalism.

Fourth, conceiving of how various workers seek spatial fixes that are sometimes coincident with, but frequently different from, those favored by capital or by other groups of workers allows for a much less mechanistic theorization of the production of space under capitalism. Indeed, it allows us to grasp that it is the conflict over whose spatial fix (capitalists' or workers'—and divisions therein) is actually set in the landscape that drives the making of the geography of capitalism. Consequently, we must see processes of class formation and inter- and intra-class relations as fundamentally geographical in nature, for spatial relations can have fundamental influences upon how classes (and segments thereof) constitute themselves and how they interact. Workers are not dropped from the air into some preexisting economic landscape but are thoroughly connected to the production of space through their struggles to work out geographical solutions to the problems of ensuring their own self-reproduction. For instance, through implementing spatially uniform wage rates workers can limit capital's ability to whipsaw different communities against each other, even as such a strategy brings with it new spatial considerations.

Finally, it is important to recognize that workers play significant roles in linking places together through their construction of various geographical scales of political and economic organization. The rewiring of the planet's spaces un-

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der globalization is not just the result of the flows of capital which are linking distant places together but is also the result of how workers are making connections across space. Through constructing new spatial scales of their own organization workers, too, reconfigure the geographical couplings between places. Thus, activities associated with developing labor solidarity are fundamentally about connecting together through various economic and political structures spatially distant places. Likewise, through reorienting their collective bargaining structures from a regional to a national scale workers transform the relationships between the different regions of a particular country; whereas in a regionally oriented bargaining system bargaining reflects only the conditions in each geographically discrete region, national bargaining means that the conditions extant in one region may now have implications for workers in another part of the country. Through imposing a new scale of bargaining, workers within different regions will now have to engage with new spatial relationships between themselves. Equally, by breaking out of national agreements and bargaining locally workers may spatially isolate their particular community from the broader space-economy and bargaining systems.

Space and spatial relations, then, can readily be manipulated in the pursuit of certain political goals, whilst the form of the economic landscape may enable or it may constrain the political praxis of various social actors. Social actors' geographic rootedness and their spatial sensibilities can lead them to adopt particular strategies and to pursue particular agendas at different times in different places. Depending upon the context within which they find themselves, workers may choose to defend class-defined spatial interests or to defend spatially defined class interests, whilst on still other occasions they may find that various class and spatial interests reinforce, rather than contradict, one another. Whereas many approaches to understanding social praxis have frequently viewed space as simply a conceptual nuisance, what I hope to have demonstrated here is that social praxis cannot be understood without an appreciation of the spatial context within which it takes place. Rather than being something to be theorized away as an inconvenience or as serving merely as the stage upon which social life plays out, space must instead be engaged with at a deep conceptual level if we are to more fully understand working-class life.

NOTES

1. Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York, 1989).

2. Bradon Ellem and John Shields, "Rethinking 'regional industrial relations': Space, place and the social relations of work," *Journal of Industrial Relations* 41.4 (1999):536–60; and Susan McGrath-Champ, "Integrating industrial geography and industrial relations: A literature review and case study of the Australian coal industry," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 85.3 (1994):195–208.

3. See Andrew Herod, *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscapes of Capitalism* (New York, 2002).

4. For other examples of such interest, see Andrew Herod (ed.), *Organizing the Landscape: Geographical Perspectives on Labor Unionism* (Minneapolis, 1998); Peter Waterman

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and Jane Wills (eds.), *Place, Space and the New Labour Internationalisms,* (Oxford, 2001); *Labour and Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work* Volume 13.2 (2002), special issue on "Industrial relations meets human geography: Spatialising the social relations of work"; and Peter Ackers and Adrian Wilkinson (eds.), *Understanding Work and Employment: Industrial Relations in Transition* (Oxford, 2003).

5. A second goal of such work was to Marxify human geography. For more on the disciplinary history of human geography's radicalization, see Richard Peet, *Modern Geographical Thought* (Oxford, 1998).

6. For a useful discussion of different conceptions of space, see Michael Curry, "On space and spatial practice in contemporary geography," in *Concepts in Human Geography,* eds. Carville Earle, Kent Mathewson, and Martin Kenzer (Lanham, MD, 1996), 3–32.

7. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (New York, 1973), 539; and Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York, 1967).

8. Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York, 1939); and Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (New Haven, 1951).

9. Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production* (London, 1976); and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991).

10. Lefebvre argued that "every society produces a space, its own space." Hence, medieval European feudal society produced a panorama in which "manors, monasteries, [and] cathedrals . . . were the strong points anchoring the network of lanes and main roads to a landscape transformed by peasant communities," whereas capitalist society is characterized by landscapes in which the space of everyday living "is founded on the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices" (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* page 53).

11. Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism,* p. 21, emphasis in original.

12. David Harvey, "Revolutionary and counter revolutionary theory in geography and the problem of ghetto formation," *Antipode* 4 (1972):1–13; David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London, 1973); David Harvey, "Labor, capital, and class struggle around the built environment in advanced capitalist societies," *Politics and Society,* 6.3 (1976):265–95; and David Harvey, "The urban process under capitalism: A framework for analysis," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2 (1978):101–31.

13. Harvey, "The urban process."

14. Ibid, page 124.

15. David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford, 1982).

16. Ibid, page 426.

17. Richard Walker, "A theory of suburbanization: Capitalism and the construction of urban space in the United States," in *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society,* eds. Michael Dear and Allan Scott (London, 1982), 383–429.

18. Encouraging suburbanization stimulated real estate markets, the building industry, consumer durables industries, the automobile industrial complex, and the banking system.

19. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford, 1990). Smith argued that whilst patterns of uneven development may initially have been the result of the accidents of history and geography which gave particular places certain resources such as coal or good farming land, over time the productive forces of capitalism have developed such that, for instance, food may now be grown in regions which, without the application of capital in the form of irrigation, would be unsuitable for agriculture or that manufacturing can take place in regions that are thousands of miles away from the sources of their raw materials. Consequently, the uneven geographical development which is the hallmark of capitalism comes, over time, to be explained less by the natural distribution of the Earth's resources and more by the machinations of the accumulation process.

20. Ibid., page xiii.

21. Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London, 1995); see also Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan, *The Anatomy of Job Loss: The How, Why and Where of Employment Decline* (London, 1982); and Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan, *Politics and Method* (New York, 1985).

22. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour,* page x.

23. Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism.*

24. Harvey, "The urban process," page 124.

25. Just as, I am sure, most capitalists do not think of their locational strategies in terms

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of how they are creating a particular geography of capitalism, even though that is precisely what they are doing.

26. Kevin Cox and Andrew Mair have explored how social actors' "local dependence" may make them more likely to form boosterist coalitions to stimulate investment in their communities. See Kevin Cox and Andrew Mair, "Locality and community in the politics of local economic development," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 78 (1988):307–25.

27. The spatial mismatch hypothesis was first put forward in John Kain, "Housing segregation, Negro employment, and metropolitan decentralization," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 82 (1968):175–97. For more on how local labor markets are structured spatially, see Jamie Peck, *Work-Place: The Social Regulation of Labor Markets* (New York, 1996).

28. In the case of Atlanta, Georgia the inability of some businesses in suburban malls to attract sufficient labor from the suburbs has forced them to offer higher wages than they otherwise would wish to do, a situation which has led some to agitate for better public transport links between the largely black and Latino inner-city neighborhoods (perceived as potential suppliers of low-wage labor) and the more affluent, largely white, suburbs. This, however, has generated resistance from many suburbanites worried about what an influx of such inner-city residents may augur for their communities. For more details, see Jason Henderson, "Contesting the Spaces of the Automobile: The Politics of Mobility and the Sprawl Debate in Atlanta, Georgia" (Ph.D. diss., Dept. of Geography, University of Georgia, 2002).

29. For a real world example of how one union went about trying to address such geographical variations, see Andrew Herod, "Labor's spatial praxis and the geography of contract bargaining in the US east coast longshore industry, 1953–89," *Political Geography* 16.2 (1997):145–69.

30. Herod, "Labor's spatial praxis."

31. Rebecca Johns, "Bridging the gap between class and space: U.S. worker solidarity with Guatemala," *Economic Geography* 74.3 (1998):252–71.

32. By "space-economy" I mean the way in which the economy is organized spatially.

33. Johns, "Bridging the gap," page 256.

34. For more details, see Andrew Herod, "Implications of Just-in-Time production for union strategy: Lessons from the 1998 General Motors-United Auto Workers dispute," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90.3 (2000):521–47 (publisher's erratum for figures published in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91.1 (2001):200–02.)

35. The network sees as one of its primary tasks mapping "the changing contours of this supply chain, from vehicle assembly plants, to in-house suppliers of major components including drive trains, to outside suppliers responsible for the manufacture of integrated systems, to commodity suppliers and job shops contracted to deliver parts and small components to other plants in the chain" (www.irnetwork.wayne.edu/ourresearch.html).

36. I explore this argument more fully in Andrew Herod, "Workers and workplaces in a neoliberal global economy," *Environment and Planning A* 32.10 (2000):1781–90.

37. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York, 1995).

38. By "friction of distance" I mean the ways in which interaction between places tends to diminish the more distant they are, much like friction will eventually cause a ball rolling across a smooth surface to come to rest. It is important, though, to not conceive of distance solely in absolute terms (i.e., miles) but also in relative terms (measured as time or cost to travel between two points, or as the amount of interaction between them) which can change as, for instance, transportation technology develops. Thus, in terms of the global financial system, New York and London are very close together in relative space (given the amount of transactions between them), whereas smaller places at the bottom of the financial hierarchy (e.g., a family-owned bank in a small village in upstate New York) may be close to New York in terms of mileage but will be organizationally quite distant from the city, due to the relative lack of interaction between them.

39. Michel Foucault, "Of other spaces," *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986):22–7, page 22.

40. Ben Agger, *Fast Capitalism* (Urbana, Il, 1989).

41. The notion of using space to hide social consequences from us may at first glance appear strange. However, it relates precisely to Marx's notion of the "fetishization of the commodity," wherein the conditions of production of particular commodities are effectively hidden from us by the spatial distance between us and the workers who make or grow what we consume. Given our spatial separation from the places of origin of such commodities, it is usually difficult for us to have much of an idea about the conditions under which they are produced.

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Whilst the active manipulation of spatial relations, then, can be used to enhance such fetishization—corporations, for instance, may deliberately lengthen the production chain so as to make it difficult for consumers to interact with the producers of what we consume—tracing the geographical connections between places of production and of consumption can facilitate the defetishization of commodities by shedding light on the socio-spatial environment within which such commodities were originally produced.

42. Richard Hyman, "An Emerging Agenda for Trade Unions?" (Discussion paper DP/98/1999 published by the Labour and Society Programme, International Labour Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland), page 3 [copy available at *www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/papers/1999/dp98/*].

43. Andrew Herod, "Homework and the fragmentation of space: Challenges for the labor movement," *Geoforum* 22.2 (1991):173–83.

44. In the case of Mexican migrant workers, for example, it is quite common for workers to spend several months in the United States and then return to Mexico for several months, with this cycle being repeated for many years.

45. For more on how men's and women's domestic responsibilities affect their work and commuting patterns, see Susan Hanson and Ibipo Johnston, "Gender differences in work-trip length: Explanations and implications," *Urban Geography* 6 (1985):193–219; and Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, *Gender, Work, and Space* (New York, 1995). Such variations, though, can be affected by race. On the whole, black and Hispanic women, at least in the Buffalo, NY and New York City metropolitan areas, spend as much time commuting as do black and Hispanic men, and spend more time so doing than do either white males or white females: see Ibipo Johnston-Anumonwo, "Racial differences in the commuting behavior of women in Buffalo, 1980–1990," *Urban Geography* 16 (1995):23–45; Valerie Preston et al., "The impact of family status on black, white, and Hispanic women's commuting," *Urban Geography* 14 (1993):228–50; and Sara McLafferty and Valerie Preston, "Gender, race and commuting among service sector workers," *The Professional Geographer,* 43 (1991):1–15.

46. One way of visualizing such spatial and temporal constraints is through the imagery developed during the 1970s by practitioners of "time geography." Such an approach tracks people's movements in "time-space" to see where and when their "time-space pathways" intersect—sometimes individuals' space-time paths cross to form "interactive bundles" (i.e., they are in the same place at the same time) whereas on other occasions they remain separate (i.e., people may occupy the same spaces but at different times, or are in different places at the same time). In the case of women's and men's abilities to attend union meetings, men may not be so tied to particular spatial locations by their domestic obligations as are women, such that they can move more easily through space and time to attend meetings at work. If men have an hour of spare time to drive to a meeting but, due to domestic obligations, women only have half an hour, women will not be able to access spatially any union meeting that is held forty-five minutes' drive away from their homes, for instance. Such ideas about "space-time bundles" are more fully explored in Torsten Hägerstrand, "What about people in regional science?," *Papers of the Regional Science Association* 24 (1970):7–21. For a good overview to such an approach see also Don Parkes and Nigel Thrift, *Times, Spaces and Places: A Chronogeographic Perspective* (Chichester, 1980).

47. Nigel Haworth and Harvie Ramsay, "Grasping the nettle: Problems in the theory of international labour solidarity," in *For a New Labour Internationalism: A Set of Reprints and Working Papers,* ed. Peter Waterman (The Hague, 1984), 59–85.

48. James Green and Chris Tilly, "Service unionism: Directions for organizing," *Labor Law Journal* 38 (August 1987):486–95.

49. See Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870–1920* (Chicago, 1990) for more on how corporate America designed the physical spaces of offices at the beginning of the twentieth century so as to facilitate the enhanced control of clerical workers.

50. See, amongst others, Kate Bronfenbrenner, "Seeds of Resurgence: Successful Union Strategies for Winning Certification Elections and First Contracts in the 1980s and Beyond" (Ph.D. diss., School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1993); Lydia Savage, "Geographies of organizing: Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles," in *Organizing the Landscape: Geographical Perspectives on Labor Unionism,* ed. Andrew Herod (Minneapolis, 1998), 225–52; and Lee Lucas Berman, "In your face, in your space: Spatial strategies in organizing clerical workers at Yale," in *Organizing the Landscape: Geographical Perspectives on Labor Unionism,* ed. Andrew Herod (Minneapolis, 1998), 203–24.

51. For more on the concept of "geographical unionism," see Howard Wial, "New bar-

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gaining structures for new forms of business organization," in *Restoring the Promise of American Labor Law,* eds. Sheldon Friedman et al. (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 303–313. For more on "social movement unionism," see Peter Waterman, "The new social unionism: A new union model for a new world order," in *Labour Worldwide in the Era of Globalization,* eds. Ronaldo Munck and Peter Waterman (London, 1998), 247–64; and Peter Waterman, *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms* (London, 1999).

52. In the United States, the model of unionism adopted after the passage of the 1935 Wagner Act has basically assumed that unions should remain focused upon the spaces of the workplace and "bread and butter" issues thereof.

53. Obviously, different office markets cater to different industries in Los Angeles and have different local character. Thus, whereas in the Downtown there are numerous janitorial contractors in the local office market, in Century City a single employer has historically dominated the market. Equally, whereas Downtown is an area used to seeing street demonstrations and large-scale protests, other office market areas are more insular and unused to such activities, a fact that has elicited quite different responses to the union's tactics. See Savage, "Geographies of organizing"; and Roger Waldinger et al., "Helots no More: Case Study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles," Working Paper #15, The Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, School of Public Policy and Social Research, UCLA, Los Angeles, April 1996.

54. On the history of waitress unionism, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, 1991); on the lessons that this history might offer for contemporary organizing, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Organizing the postindustrial work force: Lessons from the history of waitress unionism," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review,* 44.3 (1991): 419–36.

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